

REMARKS

By the present amendment, Applicants cancel claim 9 without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. Applicants note that the cancellation of claim 9 is not made for any reason related to patentability. In this regard, Applicants note that claim 9 corresponds to a claim previously indicated as allowable (before being voluntarily canceled), in a Notice of Allowability issued in the parent application (i.e., U.S. Patent Application No. 10/252,394, issued as U.S. Patent No. 6,735,714 on May 11, 2004). The corresponding claim (i.e., claim 29 in the parent application) was voluntarily cancelled in an Amendment Under 37 C.F.R. §1.312(a), filed in the parent application on December 15, 2003

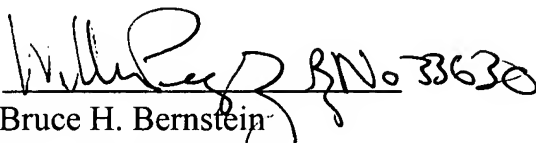
Applicants additionally note that claims 1-8 now pending correspond to claims also previously indicated as allowable in the above-noted Notice of Allowability in the parent application. The corresponding claims in the parent application, (i.e., claims 1-3, 12,13, 16 and 27-28) were cancelled in the above-noted Amendment Under 37 C.F.R. §1.312(a) in the parent application.

At least, in view of the previous indication (i.e., in the parent application) of the allowability of the subject matter of claims corresponding to claims 1-8, Applicants respectfully request an indication of the allowability of each of the claims now pending.

P24677.A02

Should there be any questions or comments, the Examiner is respectfully invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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